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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA SHARES U.S. DURBAN CONCERNS

REF: SECSTATE 14204

¶1. (U) Acting Polcouns raised on February 18 with MFA Director General for Human Rights Silvia Fernandez reftel points on USG participation in the intergovernmental working group (IWG) of the Durban Review Conference. Fernandez welcomed USG participation in the IWG, saying that U.S. participation will help inject new perspectives into a polarized debate that often pits the EU against Asia and Africa. She said she understood that the USG would decide later on future participation in subsequent meetings and the Durban Conference itself. She also indicated that the Argentine government shared many of our concerns, and noted that the Argentine and U.S. delegations planned to meet later that same day to discuss strategies on how to moderate negotiations of the draft outcome document. She said the draft text was "supported by a few and rejected by many." In particular, the GOA found the references to Israel, Israel-Palestine issues, and defamation of religion as problematic. Fernandez asserted that the document should not be used as a pretext to punish a country and to include issues that have nothing to do with discrimination. She noted, however, that EU and U.S. efforts to eliminate problematic language "will be difficult" as much of the language is lifted from the outcome document of the first Durban conference.

¶2. (U) Fernandez disclosed that she participated in the last working group session for the Durban Review Conference in late January and described the situation as "depressing." Nevertheless, she praised the IWG Chair, who is Russian, for working to obtain the confidence of all parties, noting that "this is not an easy thing to do." She relayed that the Palestinian representative had indicated that he did not want the Middle East conflict "to take the conference hostage" and had vowed to work with Switzerland to develop consensus language, a step she viewed as "hopeful." With the Durban conference still several weeks away, however, she opined that countries were locked in their positions and not yet ready to negotiate.

¶3. (U) Fernandez said that Argentina was working with Chile as GRULAC chair to coordinate GRULAC's position, and that generally speaking, GRULAC was working to facilitate consensus on the outcome document. When asked about the GOA's and GRULAC's position on reparations for colonialism, slavery, and apartheid, she acknowledged that GRULAC has not made any interventions on these issues. Representatives from Caribbean countries have voiced their views on the matter "more strongly," perhaps given their colonial history, she explained, but there is no GRULAC consensus on the matter.
KELLY